

# COMMANDER'S HATCH

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## “On Point for the Nation . . .”

by Major General B. B. Bell, Commanding General, U.S. Army Armor Center

As I assume the duties as your 38th Chief of Armor, I cannot imagine a more exciting challenge or greater privilege. On the eve of the 21st century, our mounted combat force is postured as the most lethal and relevant heavy force in the history of America's Army. Our nation, by destiny and design, has growing interests in an increasingly complex and interdependent world. At home and across the globe where our military forces defend our national interests, our armor/mechanized team is respected and admired by our friends, and feared by our potential enemies. The mounted force has become the centerpiece force of choice, whether postured for intense combat on the Korean peninsula and the deserts of Southwest Asia or demonstrating American decisiveness, commitment, and will in Bosnia and Kosovo. Our mounted warriors are leading the charge in executing the National Military Strategy — they are literally on point for the nation.

The Chief of Staff of the Army has established the Army's non-negotiable contract with the nation and the American people. We are a warfighting Army — persuasive in peace, invincible in war. My goal is to provide the central leadership and vision to field an Armored Force that expands its relevance and capabilities for the Army. Our Armored Force must get to the fight fast — before the enemy prepares the battlefield — and situationally dominate. It must achieve rapid and decisive mission resolution on *our* terms. Our objectives to achieve this goal are to:

- Structure current mounted forces to achieve marked enhancements to strategic deployability.

- Develop future mounted combat systems to achieve substantially improved strategic mobility and tactical agility, while maintaining overwhelming firepower and crew protection.
- Train our soldiers, NCOs, and officers to serve and lead as decisive warriors, enlightened by the precepts of Force XXI, yet grounded in the realities of the deployed Army on mission.
- Seek, develop, capture, then rapidly adapt, relevant breakthrough information technology to the Armored Force.

In achieving these objectives, the Armor Center will review our mounted force

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METT-T. We will capitalize on our current strengths and develop innovative approaches to overcome our weaknesses. We will pursue appropriate upgrades to our M1 fleet as the dominant flagship of our full-spectrum armored force. However, we cannot afford to overwhelm scarce strategic deployment resources with massive, unwieldy formations that arrive late on the battlefield. We cannot afford to leverage superb strategic deployment platforms such as the C-17, only to find our force tactically stacked up and vulnerable behind legions of unprotected engineer formations struggling

to reinforce Class 40 bridges to pass our heavy armor. To become a more strategically mobile and tactically agile force, we will aggressively pursue scientific and technological breakthrough applications to the development of our future mounted combat systems.

Our Armor soldiers are the best in the world — by far. They out-think, out-smart, out-quick, out-react and can out-fight any other fielded Armor force. They are innovative, resourceful, courageous, compassionate, and vicious warriors. We will build on this base. We will train our soldiers to further leverage information technology to widen the overmatch they now enjoy. They will literally think, plan, and execute “out of the box,” while staying inside our proven doctrine. They will be predictably unpredictable and they will thrive on uncertainty.

We will enhance our commitment to instilling in our warriors the values and standards which are the foundation of our Army, recognizing that our volunteer mounted troopers serve selflessly, prepared to accept enormous hardship, deprivation and death to defend the nation and the ideals on which it is built.

Today, the mounted combat force has never been more important or central to the Army's ability to fight and win our nation's wars, defend its interests and preserve the peace. To cement and expand our relevancy, we will commit ourselves to ensuring that the mounted force is formed, trained, and equipped as a decisive, lethal, rapidly deployable, and agile force for the next millennium.

STRIKE FIRST!